

## EARLY MALAYAN-THAI BORDER COLLABORATION AGAINST COMMUNISTS: POLICY CONSIDERATION

NIK ANUAR NIK MAHMUD

### INTRODUCTION

THE Malayan Communist Party (MCP) began an armed revolt against the British Malayan authorities in early June 1948 with a view to replace them with a Communist People's Republic. This led to the declaration of a state of emergency in Malaya on June 1948.<sup>1</sup> With the outbreak of a Communist uprisings in Malaya, the situation along the Malayan-Thai border became critical.<sup>2</sup> The Malayan authorities assumed that, when defeated, the Malayan Communists might infiltrate into Thai territory from Malaya and, prior to that, might use it as a base for operations against Malaya. As the land border between Malaya and Thailand was long and ran through thick jungle, it was impossible for the Malayan security forces to prevent incursions of men or the supply of weapons and materials from Thailand into Malaya.<sup>3</sup> Close cooperation between the two states has become a practical necessity in order to restrict the operations of those terrorists bands, and eventually to render them completely inoperative.

### MALAYAN EMERGENCY AND POLICY CONSIDERATION

A few weeks after the declaration of a state of emergency in Malaya, Malcolm MacDonald, the British Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, telegraphed Richard Whittington, the British Counsellor at Bangkok, asking him to invite Thai collaboration in operations against the Communists along the frontier region.<sup>4</sup> Close border cooperation between Malaya and Thailand was felt necessary in order to restrict the operations of the Communists and eventually to render them completely inoperative. As regard to the Malayan security operations, MacDonald hoped that the Thai government would not take too seriously a view of possible minor incidents such as occasional involuntary crossings of the ill-defined border by the Malayan patrols. The Thai Government was fully prepared for direct cooperation with the British Malayan authorities at the frontier to combat Communist terrorists.<sup>5</sup> They also agreed to take lenient view of occasional crossings of the ill-defined border by the Malayan forces during operations.

In spite of this goodwill, it seemed to the Malayan authorities that the local Thai authorities on the frontier were ineffective in controlling the movement of guerillas to and across the border and also in preventing the Chinese Communists

from organising and training recruits in the Thai border area. *The Times* of July 17 reported to the effect that many thousands of Communists were trying to cross the border into Malaya from Thailand.<sup>6</sup> This report however was discounted by the British Embassy at Bangkok. The Embassy believed that, although individual terrorists might well be finding their way into Malaya from Thailand, there was no reason to suppose that any large-scale movement of Communists was afoot.

Sir Alec Newbolt, the acting High Commissioner, decided to send a delegation under the leadership of H.P. Bryson, the acting Secretary for the Federation of Malaya, with Major-General C.B. Boucher, the G.O.C. Malayan District, Air Vice-Marshal Sanderson, A.O.C. Malaya, and high ranking Police and naval officials, to Songkhla 'for meeting with Thai officials of equal standing and with authority to make decisions' on border cooperation.<sup>7</sup> If the meeting was not possible at Songkhla, Newbolt said he was prepared to send the delegation to Bangkok.

Whittington, however, disagreed with Newbolt's plan as he himself and the Thais had all along had in mind the establishment of effective contacts across the border between the Malayan and Thai civil and military officials working at the frontier. 'Without knowing what you have in mind', Whittington told Newbolt, 'I cannot see that any advantage would be gained by meeting an equivalent array of Siamese high ranking officials, either at Songkhla or at Bangkok, especially as my impression is that headquarters of various services in Bangkok are woefully lacking in accurate information about what goes on on the border. On the contrary the proposed visit would certainly give rise to liveliest speculation probably of an undesirable character, and might well frighten the Siamese.'<sup>8</sup>

Before taking any decision about Newbolt's suggestion, Whittington proposed to send Guy Madoc, First Secretary at British Embassy in Bangkok, to Kuala Lumpur to explain on what basis they envisaged cooperation with the Thai could be obtained. Whittington felt that the Malayan authorities might have in mind cooperation on a much wider scale which might involve some arrangement with Thailand that would allow British or Malayan forces to operate in Thai territory. He reminded MacDonald that any approach of that kind to the Thai authorities would be met with a rebuff which it would be easy for them to justify.

I trust therefore that there will be no question of asking Siam to turn a blind eye to this or that improper activity by British or Malayan forces operating along the frontier. They will not agree to do so, and with justification for after all trespass by armed forces of another country is surely one of the most flagrant violations of a nation's sovereignty.<sup>9</sup>

MacDonald however assured Whittington that no authority in Malaya, either civil or military, had ever contemplated making to the Thai government proposals to allow British or Malayan forces to operate in Thai territory.<sup>10</sup> The Malayan authorities were only interested in requesting the Thai Government to take a lenient view of accidental crossing of the ill-defined frontier by the Malayan forces during operations, including aircraft on reconnaissance.



Madoc arrived in Kuala Lumpur on August 6, 1948 for discussions with the Malayan officials on border matters. At the meeting with Madoc, Newbould raised the question of the ineffectiveness of the Thai local authorities in dealing with the Chinese Communists on the Thai side of the border. The report made by the European Police officer on the border, confirmed by several other sources, indicated that there were large concentrations of armed and uniformed Chinese along the Thai side of the border, particularly in the Golok river area.<sup>11</sup> Newbould believed that their presence constituted a serious threat to Kelantan, about which the Malayan authorities could do nothing but which compelled them to divert to that area troops badly needed elsewhere. Efforts by the Kelantan officials to persuade the Thai police in the area to take action against the Communists had borne no fruits. Newbould believed that the Thai officials were intimidated by the Communists. It was agreed that a strong representation should be made to the Thai Government asking for immediate action.

In view of the dangerous situation along the border as a result of the state of emergency in Malaya, it was decided to appoint a Malayan Liaison Officer to be stationed at Songkhla pending the re-opening of the British Consulate.<sup>12</sup> Newbould thought that cooperation between Malayan and Thai authorities on the spot would thereby be more effective. After consultation with Madoc, the Malayan authorities agreed to appoint Cunyngham-Brown, a Senior official of the Malayan Civil Service, as acting Consul rather than as a Liaison Officer pending the arrival of Captain Stratford Dennis, the Consul-designate, in late October, 1948.<sup>13</sup> Captain Dennis was an ex-Naval Attache at British Embassy in Bangkok.

Madoc and David Watherston, the Chairman of Internal Security in the Federation of Malaya, left for Songkhla on August 11 to request the Thai local authorities to take immediate action against the alleged Communist concentration along the Narathiwat-Kelantan border.<sup>14</sup>

The report about the alleged Communist concentration along the Kelantan-Narathiwat border had caused much concern to the Colonial Office. J.B. Williams, Superintendent Assistant Secretary, considered it 'as a serious development'. A request was made to the Foreign Office to make urgent representations to the Thai Government.<sup>15</sup> Immediately, on August 10, Whittington was asked to make an immediate representation to Pibul on the need for adequate steps against those Communist terrorists. Whittington was also asked whether he thought the Thai police and army in the southern provinces were capable of dealing with the terrorists.<sup>16</sup>

On August 12, Whittington handed an *aide memoire* to the Thai Foreign Office regarding the reported concentrations of the Communists near the Golok river area.<sup>17</sup> In the evening Whittington was granted an interview with Pibul. Pibul told Whittington that instructions had already been given to the Thai local authorities to take actions against all illegal activity on the Thai side of the border. He thought there must be some mistake on the part of the Thai police to explain their not taking

action. The Director-General of Police, Lt-General Luang Chart, also knew nothing about the Communists' concentration in the area. Pibul assured Whittington that he would make an immediate investigation into the matter and would see that his instructions regarding prohibition of illegal activity were carried out.

On Whittington's request for additional Thai armed reinforcements to the affected area, Pibul replied that there was no necessity for this as the police had already been strengthened and the Ministry of Defence had arranged for military and naval units to go to Narathiwat too. He would consider further steps as soon as he knew the result of the investigation.

Regarding the Foreign Office's enquiry about the capacity of the Thai police and army to deal with the Communists, Whittington was of the view that as long as the Thai police remained alone at Golok river they would not be able to take very effective steps against a determined enemy if the latter were at all numerous.

He noted that,

Taking into account the absence of any Siamese reputation for fighting, the quite incompetent administration and the woeful lack of intelligence now apparent in Bangkok about what is going on in South Siam, I fully agree to the present need for taking all possible precautions on the Malayan side against incursions from Siamese territory.<sup>18</sup>

Whittington's reply, which was not altogether reassuring, caused grave anxiety to the Malayan authorities. It seemed clear to them that however willing the Thai authorities in Bangkok might be to cooperate with the Malayan authorities and to deal with the terrorists organizing themselves in Thailand, the Thai authorities on the spot were clearly intimidated by the Communists and were unwilling to take any action against them. Thus no matter to what extent Pibul might offer his cooperation and however willing the Thai Government might claim to be cooperative with the Malayan authorities, for instance the appointment of a Malayan Liaison Officer to be Acting Consul at Songkhla, the fact remained that Chinese Communists were marching about quite openly in the Thai border villages. *The Times* of August 25 even carried a report to the effect that two terrorists shot dead by Gurkhas in the Pauh district of Kedah were found carrying Thai travel permits and subscription lists.

On this MacDonald wrote:

Viewed in its broad nominal aspect, the situation is that we here in Malaya are engaged in resisting a Communist threat to the peace of South East Asia and not only to peace of Northern Malaya such as would be presented by movement back and forth across the frontier of ordinary bandits. Operations now being carried out are therefore as much in defence of law and order in Siam as of law and order in Malaya. Any failure of the Siamese authorities to deal with our common enemy on their side of the border by vigorous and effective ground and air action considerably accentuates the threat to the area as a whole. At best it will be a serious cause of increased loss of lives and of delay in achieving victory in Malaya. At worst it will cause far more serious and prolonged trouble for all of us.<sup>19</sup>



He requested Whittington to suggest to the Thai authorities the importance of taking action against the Communists not only with the police but also with army and air forces units. The Malayan authorities, he stated, were prepared to act in close liaison and give the Thais any assistance that they could give. However, the Thai should not, he hoped, use the force which they built up to make trouble with the Pattani Malays that would only increase their common difficulties. MacDonald also proposed the possibility of inviting the Thais to allow the Malayan authorities in liaison with them, to deal with the resistance discreetly in Thailand. This suggestion was made in the belief that the Thai authorities were not effective in dealing with the Communists and the increasing threat posed by the Communists in Malaya.

In reply, Whittington reminded MacDonald that it was wrong for him to talk of the Communists as 'a common enemy'.<sup>20</sup> The Communists, he said, had not so far extended their aggressive campaign to include Thailand and the Thais were not at war with the Communists. So far the Thai authorities took action against the Communists only on the traditional legal basis: those who were guilty of (a) violating the immigration law and (b) carrying unlicensed firearms. The offensive action demanded by the British in the South, except in strict pursuit of maintenance of law and order, would lead them into all sort of difficulties.

It would call certainly forth a cry from the French for similar action against Vietnam activities on the north eastern border; it might incite Chinese Communists in north eastern towns and in Bangkok to subversive action; it would give an opportunity for agitation to every discontented party in Siam at a time when political affairs are none too stable. Furthermore it would obviously embarrass Siamese relations with the Soviet Legation, and possibly with the Burmese Embassy. In short, the result might be a free for all which would plunge this country into a condition far worse than Malaya, a condition with which Police and Armed forces of the country might well not be able to cope and would produce a state of affairs in this part of the world far worse than what we have now. Everything points to the fact that, for the present, the 'enemy' intends to keep quiet throughout Siam and it is my belief that it is to our immediate advantage that he would remain so. Let us therefore do all that we can to urge Siam to prevent illegal activity and to maintain law and order, but let us at the same time cease to think about 'discreet' action by British armed forces in Siamese territory. I cannot conceive that any serious operations of this kind could take place without the whole world knowing, and if the Siamese Government connived without their consequently exposing Siam to the dangers which I have indicated above. Our view here is that most important step to be taken is to install Cunyngham-Brown at Songkhla without delay.<sup>21</sup>

### THAI MISSION TO THE BORDER

On August 27, 1948 Pibul sent a high-powered mission headed by Lt. General Sook Chatakrob, the Minister of Defence, to investigate conditions in the border provinces.<sup>22</sup> It was said that at the Cabinet meeting in Bangkok on August 12, after Whittington made the representation on the Communists concentration



along Kelantan-Narathiwat border, Pibul went 'off the handle'.<sup>23</sup> He proposed to sack every police and civil administration officials in South Thailand. The reason was that while the British Embassy several times had passed to him categorical information of movement of terrorists on Thai soil, not a single report of that nature had originated from the Thai authorities. Thus the high-powered mission to Songkhla amounted to an internal commission of enquiry.

The visit of the mission had galvanised the local Thai authorities into action.<sup>24</sup> One 'pincer' operation by Thai and Kedah police was carried out successfully on August 28. Extensive arrangements were also made for further cooperation in these operations. Instructions were given to the Thai local authorities to establish the closest liaison and cooperation with Malayan authorities on the frontier.

Meanwhile, the Director-General of Police in Thailand, Lt. General Luang Chart, informed Madoc that, as a result of their investigation of the border area, they found no signs of Communist concentrations along Kelantan-Narathiwat border as alleged by the Malayan authorities.<sup>25</sup> Madoc blamed the Malayan authorities for sending unreliable information, which was never graded for accuracy, to the Thais. He feared that if the Malayan authorities continued to pass to the Thais inaccurate information, or information which was out-of-date, and 'consequently start them off on wild goose chases into that extremely difficult jungle-tangle, such little enthusiasm as they may possess will soon be exhausted'. He suggested that in future the Malayan authorities should substantiate their belief in the reliability of a certain piece of information by providing an official guide, preferably a Police Officer, to accompany the Thai Police party charged with investigating the report.

Luang Chart was quite enthusiastic about this idea in so far as it would dispel any lurking suspicions in the minds of the Malayan authorities that the Thais did not take any action against the illegal activity on their side of the border.

The Thai Director-General of Police also reminded Madoc that Thailand was not at war with the Communist terrorists and as such the Thai authorities could not attack them with armed forces. As far as he understood, those Communist terrorists had not yet committed any offence punishable with death. The terrorists were presumably guilty of (a) violating the Immigration Laws, and (b) carrying unlicensed firearms. Madoc expressed his hope that this did not mean that Thailand would 'pull her punches' even in such action as she could lawfully take for violations of the Immigration and Firearms Acts. They also discussed the difficulty of Thai terrain and the lack of adequate roads, railways and telegraphs in South Thailand which had hampered their efforts to take an effective action against illegal activity on the frontier. Luang Chart hoped that, as a result of the Thai mission to Songkhla, more police outposts might be built on or near the principal mountain passes into Malaya. Soon after the return of the Thai mission to Bangkok, Colonel Heslop, the British Military Attache at the Embassy in Bangkok, and his American colleague, Colonel Thorpe, were jointly invited by the Thai Minister of Defence to tour the



border provinces.<sup>26</sup> This invitation was made perhaps to dispel any suspicion on the part of the Malayan authorities particularly that the Thai local authorities on the frontier were not taking effective action against the Communist terrorists.

During his brief tour of the region between 8-13 September, 1948, Col. Heslop had discussions with Thai Military and Civil authorities on Malayan-Thai border problems and the necessity of mutual cooperation in their common interests. It seemed to Heslop that the Thai local authorities were aware of the repercussions which Malayan operations might have on their future. They had been galvanised into action and this, Heslop believed, had been stimulated by the recent tour of the Minister of Defence and by the knowledge that any shortcomings would incur Pibul's displeasure. Thai Police and Military were working together and were learning that their patrols should be synchronised with those of the Malayan authorities.

However, despite their willingness to cooperate with the Malayan authorities against the Communist terrorists, Heslop found out that the Thai Military and Police were hampered in their task by the lack of weapons and equipment. Heslop recommended that the Thai authorities should be asked for requirements of machine carbines, trucks of an American carrier type and radio/telephone sets. To facilitate the exchange of information with Malayan authorities, Heslop suggested that the Malayan authorities should supply them with five sets of quarter-inch grip maps of the border area. He also suggested that Malayan reports of insurgent movements requiring Thai action should not be passed on unless they were graded C.3 or above. This was because most of the Malayan reports of insurgent movements and concentrations on the Thai side were exaggerated and this included the reported concentration of Chinese insurgents at Sungai Golok.

Meanwhile, in early September 1948, a British Consulate was established in Songkhla. This consulate was allowed by the Thai Government to have direct radio contact with the British Embassy to Bangkok and the Malayan Federation Government in Kuala Lumpur, in order to facilitate anti-terrorist operations. Cunyngham-Brown arrived at Songkhla on September 16 to take his post as Acting Consul pending the arrival of Captain Dennis, the Consul-designate.<sup>27</sup>

## ARMS FOR THAILAND

On September 14, Geoffrey F. Thompson, the British Ambassador, called upon the Thai Prime Minister.<sup>28</sup> This was the first time Thompson had established personal contact with Pibul after the latter came to power. Thompson spoke to him about terrorist agitation in Malaya and the determination of His Majesty's government to put down a movement that was in no way inspired by nationalism. To this end military reinforcements of high quality were being sent to Malaya. Already there were signs that the terrorists were retreating northwards. It was essential that

terrorists groups taking refuge in Thailand should be drastically dealt with. The cooperative attitude so far displayed by the Thai authorities was greatly appreciated in Singapore and in London and His Majesty's Government confidently expected that the collaboration already in being would be strengthened and developed.

Pibul Songgram assured Thompson that the Thai Government would do their best to work closely with Malayan authorities, both civil and military. He also agreed to appoint a Thai Liaison Officer in Kuala Lumpur to be attached to G.O.C Malayan District and welcome any other arrangements designed to facilitate cooperation. Pibul also mentioned that his military and police were hampered by a shortage of weapons and motor transport. To this Thompson replied that if the British Government could help over equipment they would certainly do so. It was agreed that this subject should be discussed directly between Military Attaches and the Thai Minister of Defence.

Later, Pibul Songgram gave his personal assurances in writing to Thompson about his government's policy to cooperate with the Malayan authorities against the Communists.

As regards the disorders in the South, the Siamese Government on their part are fully alive to the menace and danger which have been pointed out in your Excellency's *aide memoire*, that is why measures have been taken to collaborate in the work of suppression as is evidenced at the present time and I can assure you that we shall extend the necessary cooperation to the best of our ability. I venture to hope, however, that whatever we may be called upon to do our efforts will be given due sympathy and understanding from your Excellency, for the Siamese Army and Police Forces greatly lack armaments as well as vehicles for the performance of our task. Nevertheless, I am confident that the disturbing incidents on the Siamese side of the border will not spread much further.<sup>29</sup>

Looking at the Thai's efforts, Thompson was satisfied that it was the policy of the Thai Government to cooperate with the authorities in Malaya in fighting the terrorists in the border zone. In his letter to Malcolm MacDonald on September 16, Thompson noted:

it will, however, be appreciated that in Oriental countries, the flesh is sometimes weak, however willing the spirit. While assessing goodwill at its maximum value, we must not be too impatient nor intolerant if miracles of execution fail to materialize. I can only add that I and my staff will continue to exert ourselves to the utmost to secure effective collaboration in the defeat of the thugs who are the common enemy of both the countries.<sup>30</sup>

On October 1, the Thai Minister of Defence submitted a list of the requirements of the five Thai battalions stationed in the Southern provinces.<sup>31</sup> He hoped that the British Government could assist in making good the deficiencies faced by the Thai military and police. Thompson, however, could not guarantee that his request could be met 100%. However, Thompson added, the Military Attache was to proceed to Singapore on October 4 to confer with Commander-in-Chief, FARELF,



and others and he would take full particulars of what was wanted and would, Thompson hoped, be able on his return to indicate what could be done to help Thailand reequip her five infantry battalions in South Thailand.

On October 4, Col Heslop, the British Military Attache in Bangkok, went to visit General Headquarters FARELF and Headquarters Malayan District to discuss with Commander-in-Chief FARELF and General Boucher, G.O.C Malayan District, ways and means of improving cooperation with the Thai Forces on border operations and also to discuss the advisability or otherwise of helping the Thais with an issue of arms and equipment and to consider a suitable scale for such an issue.<sup>32</sup> During Heslop's talk with the military authorities in Singapore and Malaya, it was generally agreed that cooperation with the Thais was essential to a successful outcome to their operations against the Communists in Malaya. That could be achieved by a policy of persuasion coupled with friendly advice, material help and constructive criticism. Heslop impressed upon them that the Thais were alive to the situation in South Thailand and had taken several steps to meet it. To Heslop, it was immaterial whether all those moves by the Thais were activated entirely by self interest or not. Heslop argued:

The fact remained that we were offered a measure of ready cooperation by an independent Sovereign State and it was in our interests to exploit this to the full. We would achieve nothing by a dictatorial or destructively critical attitude. We might achieve something by persuasion, material help and advice. To my mind our choice was obvious.<sup>33</sup>

Despite their willingness to cooperate, however, the Thai military and police were hampered in their task by the lack of arms and equipment. Heslop suggested that the military authorities should help the Thais with an issue of arms and equipment.

The military authorities agreed that there would be obvious military advantages in helping the Thais. In their view, the propriety or otherwise of equipping the Thai army and police in South Thailand from British sources was a matter for decision at the Foreign Office and War Office. However such decision must be guided by certain factors:

a. The Thais might not use the arms supplied to them for the purpose of fighting the Malayan terrorists but might use them to oppress the Pattani Malays. This would be most embarrassing for the British politically if the Pattani Malays got the impression that they were being oppressed with the help of arms from British sources.

b. Through sheer incompetence the Thais might lose their weapons in action against the terrorists. If that happened the British would indirectly reequip the terrorists with the arms which they so badly needed.

As to (a) Heslop agreed that it was a political issue for decision at top level. Personally he felt that it was a risk worth accepting. 'In any case if the Siamese forces were used to suppress a movement against their established Government they could hardly be blamed if they used whatever arms they had at their disposal. In any case the scale of arms recommended was very modest and would be limited to units in South Siam'.<sup>34</sup>

As to (b) Heslop agreed with the opinion of the military authorities that the risk under that heading was justifiable only provided that they could guide the Thai police and military in jungle tactics and techniques in the light of British practical experience.

An agreement was reached with military authorities at FARELF and the G.O.C Malayan District that the British Government should supply sufficient arms to re-equip the five battalions operating on the Thai-Malayan border. The military authorities also agreed to train the Thai military and police in jungle tactics and the handling of weapons, and if requested by the War Office, FARELF would do all possible to help supply at any rate a proportion of the arms and equipment required, except for the motor transport. On returning to Bangkok, Heslop submitted his recommendations to the British Ambassador for his consideration.

Meanwhile, Thompson also received a report from Cunyngham-Brown, the acting British Consul, regarding the situation in South Thailand.<sup>35</sup> Contrary to Heslop's findings, Cunyngham-Brown alleged that the Thai military and police were more interested in repressing the local Malays than operating against the Chinese bandits on the Thai side of the border. He alleged that in the immediate surroundings of the towns of Narathiwat and Saiburi alone no less than 66 Malays had been killed by the Thai police since the beginning of 1946. Cunyngham-Brown was of the opinion that the Malayan authorities would not be able to get real cooperation from the Thais against the Communist terrorists while Malay discontent lasted and while the Thais remained uncertain of their future behaviour. He also expressed his fears that if the Malays were pressed too hard they might be forced to make common cause with the Communists who would not fail to exploit it to their advantage.

Although on reading Cunyngham-Brown's report, Thompson at first had second thoughts about Heslop's proposals, he seemed to have decided on balance that the British Government should supply arms to the five Thai infantry battalions in South Thailand. In his letter to M.E Denning, Assistant Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, on October 14, Thompson argued:

In coming to this conclusion we did not ignore the risks involved and, in particular, we appreciated the certainty that if arms were lent, some of them would inevitably fall into the hands of terrorists or other undesirables. Also, we realized that if the Malays in the Southern provinces persisted, with the encouragement they have undoubtedly received in the recent past, and may still be receiving from their brethren across the border, to make things difficult for the local Siamese authorities, then these arms would be used against them. Nevertheless,



we felt that these risks would be worth taking in the general interests of reasonably effective Siamese cooperation on the border.<sup>36</sup>

Thompson blamed the Malayan civilian authorities for allowing discontent to be fanned by Tengku Mahmud Mahyideen, the leading Patani Malay leader, and others from British territory by the device of implying that in the end the British Government would come to their help.<sup>37</sup> He assured M.E Denning that it was not the intention of the Thai Government to take repressive measures against the Malays in South Thailand.

Thompson also blamed the Malayan local authorities on the frontier for spreading sensational reports about the alleged terrorist concentrations along the Thai-Malayan border, which were largely exaggerated.

He added:

This, however, did not prevent their being taken very seriously at the time, so much so indeed that I am inclined to believe that they may have resulted in the Toh Moh bombing<sup>38</sup> and in the more or less simultaneous consideration of 'discreet operations' and accidental bombings in Siamese territory.<sup>39</sup>

He expressed his hope that reports from native agents would be checked and graded. Otherwise, they might cause unnecessary alarm and despondency and, incidentally strengthen the already widespread and rather unthinking ill-feeling against Thailand so prevalent in British circles in Malaya.

Paul F. Grey, Head of Southeast Asia Department of the Foreign Office, after consultation about the supply of arms to the Thai forces with MacDonald, felt that the British Government should go ahead with the supply of arms to the Thai forces in spite of the possible risk involved.<sup>40</sup> In his letter to Brigadier C.R Price, Ministry of Defence, Grey enquired whether the arms suggested could be supplied to the Thai Government.

As you will see from Heslop's report, FARELF made him no direct offer of equipment but said that, if the War Office made enquiries of them, they thought that they would be able to supply at least a proportion of the required equipment, with the exception of motor transport, which the Americans may be able to supply. We would like to go further with Thompson and the Colonial authorities but feel that meanwhile we should ask you to let us know in principle whether the arms suggested could be supplied.<sup>41</sup>

Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner for Malaya, insisted that the supply of arms to Thailand should be contingent upon an undertaking being given that the arms would be effectively used for the purpose of suppressing the Communists along the border and not in order to suppress the Muslim minority in South Thailand. He was concerned that it would create the impression in Malaya that the British Government were providing arms to the Thai Government for use against fellow Muslims in South Thailand.<sup>42</sup> In fact, the Malayan press seized on these

events to express its fear that the opportunity might be used to suppress the Pattani Malays.<sup>43</sup>

Gurney noted that some 2,000 Chinese Communists in scattered parties were in the immediate vicinity of Thai territory. Although those forces did not constitute a serious threat or immediate threat to Malayan territory, Eighteen Pattani Malays who fled into northern Malaya expressed the same opinion as the Malayan newspaper that the Malays, and not the Communists, would be the target of the Thais in border actions. They also asserted that a new phase in the persecution of Malays in the four provinces had begun. Gurney believed they represented a potential source of trouble. Gurney felt that Thompson must be very badly informed as to the true state of affairs on the border and as to the ability and willingness of the Thais to do anything effective themselves in that area.<sup>44</sup>

To ensure some degree of control over the use to which the arms supplied by the British would be put, P.C Scrivener, the British Deputy Commissioner-General in Southeast Asia, suggested that in return for the supply of arms, the Thai Government might be asked to receive a military mission.<sup>45</sup>

Thompson however thought that Gurney's more limited proposals specifying the use of arms against Communists would be possible to achieve if the Malayan authorities could give a guarantee that they would do their best to prevent disaffection among the Pattani Malays being organised from British territory.<sup>46</sup> Thompson informed Gurney that as a result of the investigations made by the Thai authorities in the area they found no concentration of the Communists terrorists as claimed by the Malayan authorities. He believed that the report emanated from native agents who feared they would not be rewarded if they returned with little to say.

With regard to Scrivener's suggestion of a British military mission to Thailand, Thompson felt that would be possible if the Malayan authorities could ensure that the suggested mission might not be considered by the Pattani Malays as the vanguard of British military support they were said to be expecting.

The question of the supply of arms to Thailand was also discussed with considerable interest at the Colonial Office. Rees-Williams, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Colonial Office, disagreed with the proposal to supply arms to Thailand. He minuted that the Colonial Office should press for a stoppage of arms supplies to Thailand.

In the larger sphere I am concerned to see that arms are to be supplied to the Siamese. My information is that the Siamese are, as they have been for many years, hostile to us and untrustworthy. The F.O. perhaps guided by the enthusiastic Mr Thompson, has not listened to us in this matter. The present Prime Minister was also Prime Minister when the Japanese were in Siam. The Chinese still as ever run the commercial life of the country. The Communists draw large sums, as protection money, from the rich Chinese. We should I think press (1) for a stoppage to all arms supplied to Siam (2) for a more helpful attitude on the part of his Embassy; they should realise that we are responsible for Malaya's foreign policy and



policy with regard to Siam should approximate to that of Malaya's if she were independent; otherwise there is political exploitation no better than economic exploitation.

Even Capt Dennis, who is obviously also *parti Pris* & a sufferer from consilitis, admitted that he was told by the Governor of South Siam that the Malays were to 'some extent suppressed'. This is our case.<sup>47</sup>

O.H Morris, Principal at the Colonial Office, however, argued that there was no question of stopping arms to Thailand since no arms were being sent.<sup>48</sup> He suggested that the Colonial Office should represent to the Chiefs of Staff that any supply of arms in the future should be conditional on the giving of the undertaking by the Thais as insisted upon by Gurney.

On November 24, J.D Higham, Assistant Secretary at the Colonial Office, wrote to P.F Grey expressing the High Commissioner's view that no arms should be supplied without adequate safeguards, since to give the Thais the means wherewith to tackle the possibly more congenial task of suppressing the Pattani Malays would only aggravate the Malayan frontier difficulties.<sup>49</sup>

It is not inconceivable that; if the Pattani Malays are driven to desperation (despite the well-meaning edicts issued by the central government of Bangkok) a situation might arise which could not but be favourable to communist purposes. I am writing now to emphasise that, if the Chiefs of Staff agree that arms may be released, the Colonial Office should be given full opportunity to discuss the whole policy of supply of arms; we regard it as important to that we should be kept in touch with any negotiations with the Americans on this subject.<sup>50</sup>

On November 30, the Foreign Office was informed that the British Chiefs of Staff had considered their recommendations and had raised no objection to the supply of arms and equipment to Thailand.<sup>51</sup> They also saw no reason why conditions should be imposed on the supply of available equipment, unless there were political considerations. All the arms and equipment recommended by Heslop were available except for certain special types of rifles and motor transport.

It should be noted that the State Department also was recommended by its Military Attache at Bangkok to equip the Thai forces in South Thailand. However, despite their desire to equip the Thai forces, the State Department said that they would not be able to help unless the Thais definitely applied to purchase surplus United State stores since no enabling legislation to the effect had been passed.<sup>52</sup>

The mounting Communist victories in China against the nationalist forces and the consequent imminent threat that it might pose to Southeast Asia, particularly Malaya, had made the question of supplying arms and equipment to the Thais' five infantry battalions more urgent. The Conference of the United Kingdom and Administrative Representatives in South and East Asia in Singapore on November 8, 1948, concluded that the Communist victories in China would further increase Communist activity in Malaya and in Southern Thailand.<sup>53</sup>

The situation in China did not fail to influence the Colonial Office view on the question of the supply of arms and equipment to Thailand. In fact, O.H Morris, the principal at the Colonial Office, was asked to prepare a paper on Anglo-Thai relations as they affected Malaya. Morris concluded that the British Government, in collaboration with the United States, should strengthen Thailand so as to enable her to deal more effectively with disorder in any part of the country. The suggestion that arms and equipment should be provided for five battalions in South Thailand should be accepted.<sup>54</sup>

Commenting on Morris's paper, Higham advised the Colonial Office to take a broader view and not attempt to insist that arms issued to the Thai army should be for the primary purpose of improving security on the Malayan frontier but recognise that they would strengthen the Pibul Government against Communist pressure in general.

He added:

I am, of course, aware that Pibul is not a man in whom undue confidence can be placed and that the possibility cannot be excluded of Pibul compromising with the Communists for sake of retaining a stable regime in Siam, and I think we must, therefore, back him in full.<sup>55</sup>

However, before giving their approval, Higham noted that the Colonial Office should satisfy itself that the Malayan authorities had no objection to the supply of arms and equipment to the Thai Army.<sup>56</sup>

On December 13, Higham informed J.O Lloyd of the Foreign Office of his proposal to send a telegram to Gurney asking for his approval of the supply of arms and equipment to Thai army.<sup>57</sup> Higham proposed to suggest to Gurney the possibility of using the promise of arms as a means of forcing the Thai Government to take active measures against the Communists. He also suggested that the supersession of the security articles of the Formal Agreement of 1946 with Thailand might be used as a bargaining point in the question of arms for Thailand.<sup>58</sup>

J.D Lloyd, in his reply on December 16, recognized that the Malayan authorities were in favour of giving arms and equipment to Thai forces.<sup>59</sup> With regard to Higham's suggestion to use the promise of arms as means of forcing the Thai Government to take more active measures against the Communists, Lloyd felt that such a proposal would only cause resentment amongst the Thais. On the other hand, he believed if arms were supplied to them it would increase morale and fighting efficiency among Thai troops concerned and would lead to a more vigorous prosecution of the anti-Communist offensive.

Lloyd also rejected the suggestion to use the supersession to the security articles of the Formal Agreement with Thailand as a bargaining point in the question of arms for Thailand. He thought that such effort would be politically most undesirable and would certainly produce unfortunate reactions among the Thais.

Higham accepted both of Lloyd's suggestions.<sup>60</sup> On December 18, Higham asked Gurney for his approval of the supply of arms and equipment to the five Thai



battalions stationed in South Thailand.<sup>61</sup> Gurney replied that he did not wish to press his original objection to the issue of arms and equipment and was content to rely on the Anglo-Thai Conference to be held at Songkhla on January 6 to work out proposals to ensure that the arms were used in the right way.

In view of Gurney's agreement, Higham hoped no objection would be raised in the Colonial Office to the proposal for immediate action. 'As far as motor transport is concerned the Siamese will either have to look to civilian supplies in this country or attempt to purchase transport in the United States. Any arrangements about the employment of these arms by the Siamese should be worked out between experts from the two countries at the forthcoming conference at Singgora.'<sup>62</sup> J.J. Paskin, Assistant Secretary, was also prepared to inform the Foreign Office that the Colonial Office would acquiesce in the supply of arms to Thailand.<sup>63</sup>

Rees-Williams, however, agreed to the supply of arms and equipment to five Thai infantry battalions in South Thailand only with reservations. He minuted:

I consider, however, that we should only agree the F.O. selling (not giving) the arms provided there is an undertaking that they are not used against the Pattani Malays & that if there is any sign of them being so used further supplies, or supplies contracted for but not delivered, will be cut off at once.<sup>64</sup>

The Foreign Office was duly informed about the Colonial Office's decision that every precaution must be taken to ensure that arms given to the Thais were definitely used for the suppression of Communism, and not against the Moslem minority in South Thailand.

On January 1, 1949, Thompson was informed about the British Government's decision to supply arms and equipment to the five Thai battalions on the understanding that those arms were not destined to be used for the repression of Pattani Malays.<sup>65</sup> Thompson was asked to inform the Thai Government that they could purchase from the United Kingdom the arms and wireless equipment. However, they could not supply from military sources any of the transport required by the Thais except the civilian type vehicles or reconditioned surplus service vehicles. Alternatively, it was suggested the Thai Government could attempt to purchase transport in the United States.

Thompson, however, did not approach the Thai Government as instructed but instead suggested that the British should first ascertain from FARELF whether the latter could, if authorised, supply what was required from stocks available. Thompson also insisted that those arms and equipment should be supplied on a loan basis.<sup>66</sup>

The Foreign Office, however, disagreed with Thompson's latter suggestion.<sup>67</sup> It noted that demanded payment arrangements had been made with other countries and therefore it was not prepared to establish a precedent in the case of Thailand. Furthermore, Thailand was not considered 'to be so badly off financially that she cannot afford to pay for even the limited quantity now required. Indeed she

has large sterling balances not only to purchase civilian equipment for her own rehabilitation but also to re-equip her armed forces with modern equipment and so help to improve their fighting efficiency.'<sup>68</sup>

Thompson replied that in advocating such positive action, he did not suggest that the British Government should supply the Thai forces with weapons and equipment free, gratis and for nothing.<sup>69</sup> Thai reactions to the British arms offer showed clearly, however, that cash payments for such material were looked upon askance in Bangkok, where there had been from the beginning apprehension over the cost of anti-terrorist operations in the south. The British, on the other hand, were reluctant to consider even a small deal on anything but a cash basis. Thompson suggested that the Foreign Office should consider the possibility of supplying arms and equipment from their monthly payment for rice. This would spare the Thais the need to make cash outlays while enabling the British to secure immediate payment.

The Foreign Office agreed that Thailand, if she agreed, could make its payment for arms and equipment by setting it against their monthly payment of rice.<sup>70</sup>

#### BANGKOK TALKS AND THAI-MALAYAN CONFERENCE AT SONGKHLA

Meanwhile, in late November 1948, MacDonald flew to Bangkok for a conference with Premier Pibul and other high ranking officials of the Thai Government on border cooperation. In an effort to gain the complete and unqualified cooperation of the Thai Government, MacDonald reiterated assurances that British harboured absolutely no designs on the Southern States of Thailand, a current Thai concern.<sup>71</sup> On the other hand, the Malayan Government were seeking to prevent disaffection from being organised from Malayan territory. Pibul assured MacDonald that his Government was willing to cooperate with the Malayan authorities in anti-Communist measures in the South. It was agreed that a Malayan-Thai conference be held at Songkhla in early January 1949 to discuss practical problems of cooperation in the suppression of terrorists.

The conference was held at Songkhla on 6 and 7 January, 1949. The Malayan delegation was led by Major-General Sir Alec Boucher, General Officer Commanding Malayan District, while the Thai side was led by Major-General M.L. Chuang Seniwongs, General Officer Commanding 5th District. Colonel Thorpe, the United States Military Attache, also attended the conference as an observer. Col Thorpe was described by Thompson as 'anglo-maniac and is besides inclined to harbour suspicions of our aims and objectives in the south'.<sup>72</sup> In his opinion, Col. Thorpe's presence in the Songkhla conference would diminish his suspicious attitudes towards the British and also encourage the Thais in their anti-terrorist cooperation with Malaya.



After a preliminary exchange of courtesies, the conference broke up into three committees so that as much work as possible could be done in the limited time available. The Military Committee was led by Major-General M.L Chuang Seniwongs, the Civil (political) sub-committee was presided over by the Regional Commissioner, Phya Amorit Damrong, and the Police Committee was chaired by Police Colonel Phichit, Police Chief of the Southern Region.

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE MILITARY COMMITTEE

Before undertaking discussion of items on the agenda, Major-General Boucher was asked to address the meeting generally on the situation from his point of view. He explained that his operations were based and depended upon complete integration between the Services and Police. The difficulties imposed by any international boundary in the theatre of operations had to be accepted and the desirability of mutual cooperation between the Thai and Malayan authorities was in the circumstances obvious. He believed that personal contacts and a frank exchange of views for practical implementation were prerequisites to success.

Major-General M.L Chuang responded by stressing that so far the operations in Thailand were directed against law breakers, whatever their nationality, and not against persons merely because they happened to be communists. Within these limitations he promised full cooperation. He also stressed that so far the operations against law breakers had been undertaken by the police or, in one or two cases, by combined police and marine forces. Army units had not been committed and it was not his policy to commit them until and if the Police wanted that help.

After this brief introduction, the meeting proceeded to discuss agenda items. Summarily the main concern of the Military Committee was to discuss practical means to deal with the terrorists. To ensure a successful operation against the terrorists, several arrangements were agreed.

### a. Intelligence

It was agreed that intelligence and exchange of information would continue to be fully given. Methods of 'speeding up' exchanges were considered and decided upon as follows:

1. Local contacts would be through Police.

2. Normal reports of major importance and where the time factor was not vital would be exchanged direct between the two commanders i.e Commander North Malaya District with Headquarters at Taiping and the Thai G.O.C. 5th District at Kor Hong. Transmission would be via Headquarters Malaya District and the British

Consul at Songkhla.

3. It was agreed to introduce a system of 'SIT REPS' (Situation Reports) fortnightly which would be exchanged between the G.O.C 5th District and Commander North Malaya District through the British Consul at Songkhla.

b. Air Photography

The Air Officer Commanding Malaya, Air Vice-Marshal Sanderson, who also attended the meeting, offered to assist the Thai authorities on request with photo reconnaissance of any specified areas on the Thailand side in which the Thais might suspect terrorist concentrations. The Thais accepted the offer. The Royal Air Force aircraft were allowed to fly over Thai territory as far as the 7th. parallel of latitude for reconnaissance purposes.

c. Combined Operations

The meeting agreed that there should be no question of joint operations undertaken by Malayan and Thai Military forces. All that military Commanders could hope to achieve was joint planning when it was envisaged that the enemy were likely to cross or recross the border. In such cases operations would be synchronized so as to close the gaps and thus give the terrorists no haven of refuge. For security reasons reports of impending operations would not be forwarded until 24 hours before commencement.

d. Training

General Boucher explained briefly the functions of the Jungle Warfare School at Johore Bharu and the British Military Attache confirmed that a special course for Thai officers only had been arranged for the period 29 January - 26 February 1949. It was hoped that certain new arms and equipment would be supplied to Thailand from British sources. If those arms were supplied, instruction in their use would be provided either at the FARELF Training School or by sending instructors to Songkhla.

e. Interrogation Reports

It had been agreed by the conference that interrogation of prisoners on the Thai side was a police affair. General Boucher pointed out that he had no comment to make on that provided the requirements of 'Military intelligence' were also observed e.g the military were concerned to establish that a prisoner had been questioned by both Police and Military Intelligence Officers. The Director-General



of Thai Police agreed to ensure that both aspects of interrogation would be observed by his police and the meeting accordingly decided that Thai police interrogation, if conducted on those lines, would meet requirements. All reports from Thai sources would be sent to Malayan Police Headquarters at Alor Star and G.O.C Malayan District would have a Military Intelligence Officer there to examine reports jointly with the Police authorities.

f. Coastal Patrols

General Boucher and the Air Vice-Marshal Sanderson outlined the procedure obtaining in Malayan coastal waters and asked if similar measures existed in Thai waters. It was agreed that representations would be made to the Thai Naval authorities to ensure that similar patrols were being carried out and that both the east and west coasts should be patrolled, the former having priority.

g. Illegal Immigration

General Boucher outlined the obvious advantages to him as a military commander of the introduction of national registration in Malaya and asked if similar measures existed in Thailand. The Thai Director-General of Police said in reply that registration of aliens had been required by law for a considerable period and that with those limits steps were being taken at the moment to tighten up the procedure considerably. He hoped that national registration would become law in Thailand.

Col. Heslop, who was present at the Military Committee meeting, observed that the meeting was a successful one. However it remained for decisions to be implemented and a quick 'follow up' in all cases was imperative.<sup>73</sup>

## PROCEEDINGS OF THE POLICE COMMITTEE

The Police committee was chaired by Police-Colonel Phichit, the Thai Police Chief of the Southern Region. William Nicol Gray, the Federation Commissioner of Police, Guy Madoc, First Secretary at the British Embassy in Bangkok and Livingstone, a Malayan Intelligence Officer, were the Malayan delegates at the meeting.

Gray opened the meeting by describing the build-up of the Communist terrorist offensive in Malaya. He mentioned the increasing risk of movement by terrorists to and fro across the border. Though the police strength in the frontier areas would be increased on the Malayan side by 600 men, Gray could not guarantee that such efforts would stop all trans-frontier movement. On intelligence, Gray agreed on the fullest possible exchange of intelligence but he emphasised the need for a very high degree of security. He considered that only wireless communication would be

secure from 'tapping' by the enemy. He said that Malaya was greatly increasing her police radio network, but equipment was still in short supply. Regarding the control of immigration, Gray pointed out that, both for lawful and unlawful cases, it was an obvious necessity. On the issue of combined operations, Gray said planning was essential.

Gray also welcomed the attachment of Thai police at the FARELF Jungle Training School at Johore Bharu for training in fighting and living in the jungle. He said that selected police officers would be attached to Police headquarters in Kuala Lumpur so that they might see the whole working of the drive against the terrorists. The Thai Director-General of Police accepted the offer. On the question of interrogation of terrorists, it was agreed that any terrorists who were arrested by, or who surrendered to, the Thais would be sent to Nakorn Srithammarat for detention pending a decision on their case. It was agreed that the Thai Police should send to the Malayan Police at Alor Star copies of the statements of such terrorists, together with finger prints and descriptions. If the Malayan Police decided that they would like to interrogate any such terrorists, they would be permitted to send an officer into Thailand for that purpose. The Thais undertook that the terrorists would be held at Songkhla for a week or two before sending them to Nakorn Srithammarat. This would give the Malayan Police an opportunity to carry out the interrogations at accessible Songkhla. Similar trans-border interrogation rights would be reciprocated by the Malayan Police.

Lt. General Luang Chart, the Thai Director-General of Police, warned that the efficient handling of intelligence was hampered by lack of rapid communications. There was only one Police radio transmitter/receiver in operation in South Thailand. He hoped to get more apparatus that year. Outside the towns of Songkhla and Haadyai there was no telephone communication. The telephone between the Thai Police District headquarters at Sadao and the Malayan Police sub-station at Changlun had broken down. Gray undertook to have that inspected and repaired from the Malayan side. It was also suggested to link the South Thailand Police Headquarters at Songkhla with the Kedah Police Headquarters at Alor Star. Both parties agreed that the Songkhla Consulate radio installation provided a valuable link with the Malayan Police radio system.

Luang Chart complained politely that intelligence supplied from Malaya often proved misleading. To support this, he referred to a Malayan report on the alleged Communist concentrations near Sungai Golok. It was suggested to Luang Chart that, as that patrol had been carried out four months ago, concentrations might be found if a fresh patrol was laid on. It was agreed that a Thai patrol should go through the area. As the intelligence had been supplied by the Malayan side, it was agreed that Malayan Police officers should accompany the patrol as guides and observers. As the supply problem was very difficult in such country, Gray said that he would arrange supply drops from the Malayan side. He said he might also be able to supply a mobile wireless unit with operators, so that the patrol might be in constant



touch with Kota Bharu Police wireless station, and then through the Consulate installation to Police Headquarters at Songkhla. He would also try his best to supply other aids such as mosquito repellent and anti-malaria drugs.

It was agreed that the planning of the operation would be carried out between the Chief Police Officer Songkhla and the Chief Police Officer at Kota Bahru. The Chief Police Officer Songkhla might be conveyed by air to a planning conference at Kota Bharu. The Thai delegates suggested that the Bentong area also might be combed by a similar joint patrol. Gray agreed to this.

Gray described the method by which the Malayan Police screened a whole village-cordoning off all approaches and subjecting all the inhabitants to interrogation. The Thais pointed out that - lacking a state of emergency they had no authority for such drastic action. However they thought it would be possible to work on similar lines with the excuse of checking up on alien certificates. A legal restraint arose from the fact that the Thai Parliament had not yet passed a bill imposing complete national registration.

Luang Chart suggested that patrols of Thai Police should meet patrols of Malayan Police at agreed times and places on the frontier that were to be worked out in detail by the respective authorities. The Thais considered that this arrangement would facilitate control of illegal immigration.

Madoc looked on the Songkhla meeting between the police officers of the two countries as a considerable success. Agreement was reached and promises were made which opened the way for a considerable degree of cooperation. But Madoc warned the Malayan authorities that they were dealing with an administration which was decreasingly efficient the further it extended from Bangkok.

We have had conferences in the past at which promises were made at the Bangkok centre which were not put into operation in the South Siam periphery. In this case the promises were made by the Bangkok head (Luang Chart) in the presence of the local Chief of Police Songkhla, and because of that it should prove difficult for the Songkhla Chief of Police to neglect his responsibilities.

Moreover, after previous conferences, the Malayan side too, failed to put the agreed plans into full effect. I am sure that in this case the Malayan side will set a good example to the Songkhla Siamese authorities by carrying out their responsibilities with enemy and despatch. I am sure they will have to prod the C.P.O Songkhla into action, and the sooner the prodding begins the more effective it is likely to be.<sup>74</sup>

The conference also considered political matters, particularly the Pattani Malay problems. The Thai and Malayan Governments agreed to cooperate in solving the Malay problems in the South. The Thai Government agreed to implement reforms promised by Pibul Songgram recently while the Malayan authorities agreed to curb the subversive activities by certain elements in Malaya against the Thai Government.

The conference ended on January 7, 1949. Both Sir Henry Gurney and Thompson were satisfied and agreed that the conference was very successful one and worthwhile in most respects. Gurney commented:

The Songkhla Conference seems to have been very successful in its military and police aspects. The Police on both sides appear to have got together, established personal relations and planned some joint operations against the Chinese bandits. This is wholly admirable. The Military delegates also did some useful things in arranging to take Siamese here for training and to use R.A.F planes for photography, but as the Siamese military forces are not engaged in anti-bandit operations and it is apparently not intended that they should be, their sphere of agreement does not take us very far.

We fully recognise here the importance of tempering our impatience with Siamese inactivity with tolerance and appreciation of the wider issues involved. Perhaps it is not always clear to the Siamese that the Federation Government is not a H.M Government and the Malay Rulers are partners, so that it is not always reasonable or fair to assume that it is the British who are responsible for any cause of complaint.<sup>75</sup>

The first tentative result of the Songkhla Conference was the successful launching of a joint operation of Thai and Malayan forces on the frontier in early February 1949. This operation was carried shortly after the Gurkha forces were ambushed by a band of Communists at Badak in Kedah on January 13, 1949.

#### ASSISTANCE TO THE THAI POLICE

A discussion similar to that about supplying arms to the Thai Army was also developed in the respect of equipping the Thai police. The British Consul at Songkhla, Captain Dennis, after discussions with Madoc and P. Andrew, Malayan Liaison Officer, first made the latter recommendation.<sup>76</sup> Dennis also suggested that a training scheme should be arranged to improve the efficiency of the Thai Police. It was also desirable to appoint a permanent Malayan Police Liaison Officer at Songkhla and a similar officer of the Thai Police at Alor Setar.

Thompson strongly supported these recommendations on the ground that it would make Malayan-Thai collaboration against Communists in the border area more effective.<sup>77</sup> He asked the Commissioner-General for a policy decision on the supply of arms and equipment to the Thai Police on the scale suggested. He suggested that payment should be made by deducting its value from the monthly payment for exported Thai rice.

Sir Henry Gurney's attitude was encouraging. He strongly supported the Ambassador's recommendation on the strengthening of the Thai Police.<sup>78</sup> With regard to the proposal to provide arms and transport, the High Commissioner noted that it was important to ensure that this equipment would be used in border areas as



agreed with Malayan Police against their common enemy. He suggested the procedure should be that it would be issued on a loan basis through the Malayan Police Liaison Officer to be attached to the Thai Commissioner of Police Ninth Area, and that the issue should be made in stages. The High Commissioner made it clear that the equipment could not be supplied from Malayan Police sources and he suggested that in any case it would be right and proper that the loan should be from His Majesty's Government.

A.M Palliser advised that the Foreign Office should agree to the supply of these arms.<sup>79</sup> On the question of loaning the equipment, he believed that the Thais would oppose it. For that reason, he suggested, Sir Henry Gurney should be advised to drop the loan idea. He also felt that if the arms were issued in stages to the Thai Police in the area by a Malayan Liaison Police Officer, that would constitute an adequate safeguard against the arms being diverted to other areas. Both the Liaison Police Officer and Captain Dennis would be able to report on the distribution of weapons and if that did not proceed satisfactorily in the initial stages further deliveries could be suspended.

J.D Higham of the Colonial Office also supported the policy of supplying equipment to the Thai Police. Such a policy was, in his view, an essential complement to the satisfactory control of the frontier on the Malayan side by the Frontier Force. He agreed with A.M. Palliser that the suggestion of loaning equipment be dropped. He argued:

Financially, of course, a loan to Siam is not an attractive proposition since it is pretty obvious that the prospects of the recovery of any equipment turned over to the Siamese are, to say the least, slim. The cost of the arms now being made available to the Siamese army ... is being credited against HMG's liability in respect of payment of rice supplied by Siam and the Ambassador suggests that a similar procedure might be adopted here. I should myself have thought that the issue of these arms through the police and Liaison Officer would be adequate safeguard that they would be used in the frontier area and I do not think we can strongly support the loan basis proposed by the High Commissioner, particularly as the Foreign Office do not appear to be pressing the point on political grounds.<sup>80</sup>

J.J. Paskin, Superintendent Assistant Secretary at Colonial Office, also supported the arming of Thai Police.<sup>81</sup> He considered this as not inconsistent with the policy of the Colonial Office, since, quite independently of the efforts to obtain the cooperation of the Thai Police in dealing with the Communists who crossed the Malayan-Thai border, the Malayan Government was in fact proceeding with the arrangement for the efficient control of the frontier, on the Malayan side. 'We know', he said, 'that both Colonel Gray and the High Commissioner attach the greatest importance to the development of combined operations, which clearly cannot be as effective as we should like unless Siamese police are adequately equipped.'<sup>82</sup>



In his letter to J.V.B Jervis Read of the War Office, Higham emphasised the importance of reequipping the Thai police as recommended by the Malayan authorities and the British Embassy in Bangkok in order to ensure successful operation against the Communists along the Malayan-Thai border.<sup>83</sup>

The War Office agreed to the issue of arms and equipment to the Thai Police subject to certain conditions. The War Office required repayment for the expendable stores issued on loan.<sup>84</sup> These repayment and hire charges could be pressed through the British Military Attaches for agreement by the Thai government and deducted from the monthly rice payment. The War Office also agreed with the High Commissioner's proposal that some form of guarantee should be obtained that the arms would in fact be used on anti-bandit measures on the Thai-Malaya border.

On March 22, FARELF was instructed by the War Office to issue, from its stocks, arms and equipment, vehicles, as required by the Thai Police.<sup>85</sup>

On March 28, 1949, Thompson submitted an *aide memoire* to the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs making an offer to supply arms and equipment, on payment, for five battalions of Thai troops based at Haadyai, in implementation of the government's policy of anti-terrorist cooperation in the zone of the Malayan border.<sup>86</sup> He also offered to make available, if desired, to the Thai Police forces in the South additional arms and equipment. Itemised lists of the arms, equipment and supplies available for issue on payment, in the case of expendable stores, or hire, in the case of inexpendable stores, were to be forwarded later. The Malayan Government also were willing to consider facilities for the training of Thai police in jungle warfare and also disposed to favour the appointment of a permanent Thai Police Liaison Officer at Alor Setar together with a the reciprocal appointment of a Malayan Police Liaison Officer in South Thailand.

The Thai Minister was also reminded that the offers were made on the predicated assumption that their policy of cooperating with the Malayan authorities in combating Communism in the border areas would be implemented. The *aide memoire* also called for an assurance of continued collaboration.

On April 27, the Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs replied.<sup>87</sup> In regard to the proposed supply of arms and equipment for the five Thai battalions stationed in the South, the Ministry of Defence would 'cordially accept' the offer and would make all necessary arrangements with the British Military Attache. As for the offer of additional arms and equipment for the Thai Police forces, the Thai Police Department agreed to consider the purchase of such arms if itemised lists and statement of costs could be supplied to the Thai authorities for consideration. On the facilities for training, the Thai Police Department would consider the offer 'when circumstances require'.

As regards anti-terrorist cooperation, the Thai Minister assured the Ambassador that the Thai Government would collaborate as far as possible in suppressing Communists along the border and no withdrawal of Thai troops and police from the South was contemplated.



On receipt of this reply, on April 30, Thompson submitted to the Thai Ministry of Defence particulars of costs of arms for five Thai battalions for consideration.<sup>88</sup> On May 7, the Thai Ministry of Defence informed the Embassy of their agreement to purchase items from FARELF stocks at a total cost of 6,527.6s.8d: 30 2-inch mortars with 1,000 bombs; sten guns with 100,800 rounds; 16 Radio/Telephone sets No. 38 with 320 'battle' battery; 15 part worn No. 22 Radio/Telephone sets and 804 rifle grenades.<sup>89</sup> However, the Ministry rejected the suggestion that payment be made through deduction of the sum involved from monthly rice accounts. They preferred to settle the bill direct.

On June 1949, arms and equipment for the five Thai infantry battalions were shipped to Bangkok.

The British proposal for the establishment of a British Military Mission in Bangkok to advise the Thai security forces in the training and use weapons and equipment and the coordination and timing of operation on each side of the border, however, was rejected by the Thai authorities and the United States Government. As an alternative to that, a Police Border Agreement was negotiated. On 1 September 1949, a Police Border Agreement was reached between the Malayan and Thai authorities which provided for the reciprocal crossing of the Malayan-Thai frontier by police of each party. Cooperation showed a steady improvement thereafter, though it proved impossible to eliminate entirely the Communist gangs infesting the difficult border country.

<sup>1</sup>Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*, London, 1975, p. 90.

<sup>2</sup>'Paper on Malays in Siam', in Colonial Office to Kuala Lumpur, 18 March 1949, CO 717/156.

<sup>3</sup>Anthony Short, *op.cit.* p. 373.

<sup>4</sup>Singapore to Foreign Office, No. 763, 9 July 1948, CO 537/3695.

<sup>5</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 436, 12 July 1948, CO 537/3695.

<sup>6</sup>*The Times*, 17 July 1948; *The Times*, 25 August 1948; Singapore to Foreign Office, No. 774, 13 July 1948, CO 537/3695; Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 443, 14 July 1948, CO 537/3695; Foreign Office to Bangkok, No. 321/322, 17 July 1948, CO 537/3695; Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 451, 19 July 1948, CO 537/3695.

<sup>7</sup>Singapore to Bangkok, No. 480, 3 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

<sup>8</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 479, 3 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

<sup>9</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 489, 6 August 1948, FO 371/69996 F10942/21/40.

<sup>10</sup>Singapore to Foreign Office, No. 877, 11 August, FO 371/69996 (F11221/21/40)

<sup>11</sup>Federation of Malaya to Secretary of State for the Colonies, No. 955, 10 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

<sup>12</sup>Singapore to Foreign Office, No. 878, 11 August 1948, FO 371/69996 (F11147/21/40).

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup>J.B Williams to Brigadier C.R. Price, 10 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

<sup>16</sup>Foreign Office to Bangkok, No. 343, 10 August 1948, CO 537/3695.

<sup>17</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 507, 12 August 1948, FO 371/69996 (F11183/21/40).

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup>Singapore to Foreign Office, No. 914, 24 August 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12008/21/40).

- <sup>20</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 549, 28 August 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12008/21/40).
- <sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>22</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 25 (saving), 18 September 1948, FO 371/69998 (F13048/21/40).
- <sup>23</sup>'Memorandum of Interview with Director-General of Police on 27 August 1948' in R. Whittington to P.S. Scrivener, No. 139/13/48, 28 August, 1948. FO 371/69997 (F12294/21/40).
- <sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>25</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 575, 7 September 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12503/21/40).
- <sup>26</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 585, 14 September 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12731/21/40); Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 589, 15 September 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12812/21/40).
- <sup>27</sup>Minute by A.M. Palliser on Bangkok-Foreign Office, 17 September 1948, FO 371/69998 (F13180/21/40).
- <sup>28</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 589, 15 September 1948, FO 371/69997 (F12812/21/40).
- <sup>29</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 602, 21 September 1948, FO 371/69998 (F13204/21/40).
- <sup>30</sup>Thompson to MacDonald, No. 204/13/48, 16 September 1948, CO 537/3695.
- <sup>31</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 626, 1 October 1948, FO 371/69998 (F13659/21/40).
- <sup>32</sup>'Report on visit G.H.Q. FARELF, HQ Malayan District and Siam-Malaya border' by Col. Heslop, 14 October 1948' in Thompson to M.E. Denning, No. 145/13/48, 14 October 1948. FO 371/69999 (F15181/21/40).
- <sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>35</sup>Cunyngham-Brown to Thompson, 11 October 1948 in Thompson to M.E. Denning, *ibid.* It should be noted that Cunyngham to Brown was suspended from his post on October 29, 1948. See Nik Anuar Nik Mahmud, *The Malay Unrest in South Thailand: An Issue in Malayan-Thai Border Relations*, Terbitan Tak Berkala Dunia Melayu No. 17, ATMA, UKM, Bangi, 1994, chapter V.
- <sup>36</sup>Thompson to M.E. Denning, No. 45/13/48, 14 October 1948, FO 371/69999 (F151181/21/40).
- <sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>38</sup>On August 12, 1948 RAF bombed the Toh Moh mining settlement following an alleged report of Communists concentrations in the area. As a result of the bombing, the Malayan Government had to pay compensation to the Thai government of about 350,000.
- <sup>39</sup>Singapore to Bangkok, No. 914, 8 November 1948, FO 371/69996, (F11173/21/40).
- <sup>40</sup>P.F. Grey to Brigadier C.R. Price, 10 November 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15181/21/40).
- <sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup>Singapore to Foreign Office, No. 1150, 10 November 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15872/21/40).
- <sup>43</sup>*The Straits Times*, 6 September 1948.
- <sup>44</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 667, 11 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15940/21/40).
- <sup>45</sup>Singapore to Foreign Office, No. 1150, 10 November 1948, FO 371/70000 (F15872/21/40).
- <sup>46</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 759, 11 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15940/21/40).
- <sup>47</sup>Minute by Rees-Williams, 8 November 1948, CO 537/3684.
- <sup>48</sup>Minute by O.H. Morris, 20 November 1948, CO 537/3684.
- <sup>49</sup>J.D. Higham to P.R. Grey, 24 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15181/21/40).
- <sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>51</sup>P.R.M. Waterfield to P.F. Grey, No. COS 2010/30/11/8, 30 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F16876/21/40).
- <sup>52</sup>Washington to Foreign Office, No. 5358, 26 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15179/21/40); Foreign Office to War Office, 10 November 1948, FO 371/70001 (F15181/21/40).
- <sup>53</sup>Singapore to Foreign Office, No. 1252, 10 December 1948, CO 537/3696.
- <sup>54</sup>Minute by O.H. Morris, 29 November 1948, CO 537/3696.
- <sup>55</sup>Minute by J.D. Higham, 15 December 1948, CO 537/3696.
- <sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>57</sup>Higham to Lloyd, 13 December 1948, CO 537/3696.
- <sup>58</sup>These security articles required Thailand to collaborate fully in all international security arrange



ments approved by the United Nations or its Security Council (Article 6). Thailand also was not allowed to build a Canal across Thai territory linking the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Siam without the prior concurrence of the British Government (Article 7). During this time the Thai Government was asking for the revision of the Formal Agreement.

<sup>59</sup>Lloyd to Higham, 16 December 1948, FO 371/70002 (F17670/21/40).

<sup>60</sup>Colonial Office to High Commissioner, Malaya, 18 December 1948, FO 371/70002 ;

<sup>61</sup>Minute by J.D Higham, 22 December 1948, CO 537/4233.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup>Minute by J.J Paskin, 22 December 1948, CO 537/3684.

<sup>64</sup>Minute by Rees-Williams, 23 December 1948, CO 537/3684.

<sup>65</sup>Foreign Office to Bangkok, No. 3, 1 January 1949, FO 371/70002 (F17961/21/40).

<sup>66</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 29, 14 January 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2380/1191/40).

<sup>67</sup>Foreign Office to Bangkok, No.40 20 February 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2561/1191/40).

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 139, 22 February 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2844/1191/40).

<sup>70</sup>Foreign Office to Bangkok, 25 February 1948, FO 371/76289 (F3231/1191/40).

<sup>71</sup>*Bangkok Post*, 30 November 1948.

<sup>72</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 840, 16 December 1948, FO 371/70002 (F17957/21/40).

<sup>73</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 11, 8 January 1949, FO 371/76289 (F371/1061/40).

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>Henry Gurney to Thompson, 13 January 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2301/1061/40).

<sup>76</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 125, 16 February 1949, FO 371/76289 (F2479/1061/40).

<sup>77</sup>Thompson to MacDonald, No. 17, 22 February 1949, CO 537/4750.

<sup>78</sup>Gurney to Secretary of States for the Colonies, No. 277, 28 February 1949, CO 537/4756.

<sup>79</sup>Minute by A.M Palliser, 12 March 1949, CO 537/475

<sup>80</sup>Minute by J.D Higham, 10 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

<sup>81</sup>Minute by J.J Paskin, 12 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

<sup>82</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup>J.D Higham to Col. Jervis Read, 15 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

<sup>84</sup>War Office to FARELF, No 2577, 22 March 1949, CO 537/4756.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup>*Aide Memoire* to the Thai Government, 28 March 1949. CO 537/4756.

<sup>87</sup>*Aide Memoire* of 27 April 1949. Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs. CO 537/4756

<sup>88</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 325, 2 May 1949, CO 537/4756.

<sup>89</sup>Bangkok to Foreign Office, No. 339, 7 May 1949, CO 537/4756.